

# **Ginny and the Skin Tumor**

**By Emily Cameron, Age 12**

Golden sun light stream down from the cloudless blue sky, illuminating the fresh, sharp blades of grass. It was a perfect day to take my guinea pig out on the field located behind my house. My fingers gently tussled the thick, coarse hair on the fur of my guinea pig, Ginny. She gave a contented rumbling sound in her throat and chewed a blade of grass.

Suddenly, my fingers prodded an unfamiliar mass on the right side of her chin. I plucked her into the air for closer inspection. She seemed to have grown a lump on her chin. It was purple in color and the fur had parted around it, but it did not seem to be very big. It was the size of my thumbnail, but nevertheless, I consulted the Internet to see what this strange mass was. After some research, I found out it was "lipoma," a fatty, noncancerous tumor, which, according to the website, was a common occurrence for older guinea pigs, such as Ginny, who was already five years old. The website stated that the tumor was benign, so I decided not to worry about it. I assumed it would shrivel up and disappear after some time.

However, about a week later, I noticed that the lipoma had grown. It appeared to have scabbed over and was covered with a thick dark skin like a callous. Frowning in concern, I reported the new state of the lump to my parents. They agreed that if the condition did not improve, they would take Ginny to see the vet.

Unfortunately, the state of the tumor only went from bad to worse. My father tried prodding the lump in the hopes that some puss would leak out and it would shrivel up. My friends and I were concerned and frantically called several vets. But most of vets did not answer the phone as it was the weekend. The few that answered did not offer any advice as they demanded to be paid for their services. Infuriated, I gave up on calling vets for advice and decided to wait to see if Ginny's tumor situation would get any better. But it didn't; in fact, it got worse.

Surprisingly, despite having an enormous tumor dangling on the right side of her face, Ginny seemed to be acting perfectly normal. The lipoma did not seem to affect her in any way at all. She was eating as normal and still seemed as contented as before. So we decided not to take her to see the vet as her behavior had not changed. Just a few days later, the tumor started to look absolutely horrifying. It has grown a lot longer and dangled awkwardly off her face. Worst of all, Ginny was constantly nibbling and pawing at the lump, causing it to bleed. Dry blood was crusted on the fur around the growth. We finally decided that this was too much to handle. My parents agreed to take her to the vet the very next day.

The next day, we brought Ginny in to our local vet. Doctor Tama prodded the tumor and claimed that it would require surgery in order to completely remove the growth. I was frightened of the chance that something might go wrong during the surgery and Ginny would end up in an even worse condition. But I knew that the surgery was for the best.

Several hours later, we arrived back at the hospital to pick Ginny up after her surgery. The nurse presented us with a groggy but tumor-free Ginny. The doctor had shaved off a quantity of fur on her neck, causing her face to appear lopsided. Where the tumor used to be, there was a long, deep cut with five stitches holding the skin together. I recoiled at the sight, horrified by the wound. Ginny seemed slightly withdrawn and not as bubbly as she usually was, which was expected after the traumatic experience.

A week later, we brought Ginny back to the vet to get her stitches removed. Doctor Tama was not there, so the nurse had to remove the stitches instead. My father gripped Ginny's shoulders and held her with her belly facing upward. Using a pair of sharp tweezers, the nurse attempted to pluck at the stitches, but every time the tweezers prodded Ginny's flesh, Ginny would squeal in pain and begin writhing around frantically. My mother tried to feed Ginny a cucumber in an attempt to calm her down. This method worked, but not for long. Ginny gnawed furiously at the piece of fruit, and while she was occupied with the food, the nurse plucked at the stitches with her tweezers. Ginny shrieked when the sharp instrument came in contact with her skin, and

thrashed her body in a frenzy while trying to stuff the rest of the cucumber in her mouth. The nurse finally gave up and decided to sedate Ginny so that she could properly remove the stitches. We picked her up an hour later. The stitches were gone, but down the side of her neck was a long, pink scar.

When Ginny returned home, we placed her in a fresh clean cage to rest. She huddled at the corner of the cage, unresponsive to us as we gently stroked her coarse fur and murmured soothing words. Several days later, her carefree personality had returned. Despite having a deep wound in the side of her face, she was as bright and adorable as ever. I was tremendously relieved to have my beloved little pet back, and healthy once more. I was grateful that Ginny had survived the surgery and the dangerous tumor had been removed. I promised that I would never let anything happen to Ginny again.